

## **HIST 535/HIST 635: Early Modern Atlantic Lives**

Thursday 7:20 PM to 10:00 PM R

Robinson Hall B204

### **Professor Joan Bristol**

Associate Professor of History

Office: Robinson B 345

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Office hours: Tuesdays 10:30 am – 12 pm and by appointment (I assume that you would rather see me on Thursdays when you come to campus for class, so just email me for an appointment).

### ***Course description:***

This course looks at the histories of individual people in Africa, Europe, and the Americas between 1500 and 1800. The focus is historical and methodological: by examining the lives of individuals from different class and race categories we will get a sense of some of the important issues defining the early modern Atlantic world, including the boundaries between slavery and freedom, the importance of gender in public and private life, and the opportunities for, and limitations on, social mobility across space and time. We will pay attention to the methodological challenges that authors face and the choices they make when writing about individuals as we explore the genres of biography, autobiography, memoir, personal narrative, and microhistory.

### ***Assignments:***

1. Class participation (30% of final grade). This class is a discussion-based seminar. Participation is crucial to the success of the class as a whole and to your success as an individual. Participation is measured by attendance at class meetings and clear indications that you have read the assigned texts and thought about them. The best way to participate is to speak in class but you may also participate by sending me extra précis.
2. Book précis (30% of final grade). At least three times over the course of the semester you will send me a précis of the weekly reading. Instructions are at the end of the syllabus.
3. Final project (40% of final grade). Description is at the end of the syllabus.

### ***Class policies:***

- 1) You may bring a drink to class. Do not bring food to class.
- 2) If an assignment is late you must speak to me to make arrangements with me to hand it in. If you hand it in without making arrangements there is a possibility that you will not get credit for the assignment.
- 3) You are responsible for keeping track of assignments and the class schedule. I suggest that you exchange email addresses with another student so that you can catch up on any notes or assignments that you might miss.

### ***Academic Accommodations:***

If you have a disability and need academic accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at <https://ds.gmu.edu/>. Accommodations are arranged through that office.

### ***Honor Code:***

This class operates under GMU's Honor Code, which states, "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." [George Mason University Honor Code 2019-2020 final](#) Plagiarism means presenting another person's words, ideas, or arguments as your own without giving that person credit. I am obligated to report all violations of the Honor Code to the Honor Committee. See <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/> for more information about the GMU honor code and violations.

### **January 23: Introducing the issues**

Reading for the first class:

1. Jill Lepore, "Historians who love too much: Reflections on microhistory and biography," *Journal of American History*, June 2001, 88(1): 129-144.
2. Lara Putman, "To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World," *Journal of Social History*, Spring 2006, 39(3): 615-630.

These are available through JSTOR and other databases in our library.

### **Part I: Primary sources, or how people tell their own stories:**

*January 30*

Reading: Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano: Or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written By Himself*.

There are many available versions of this, including several at our library. I don't care which version you get as long as it is complete.

*February 6*

Reading: Ursula de Jesús, *The Souls of Purgatory: The Spiritual Diary of a Seventeenth-century Afro-Peruvian Mystic*, edited and translated by Nancy van Deusen, 2004.

*February 13*

Reading: Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*.

This is available in many versions, including a free online version published by Project Gutenberg. I don't care which version you get as long as it is complete.

*February 20*

Reading: William Moraley, *The Infortunate: The Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley, an Indentured Servant*, edited by Susan Klepp and Billy Smith, 2005.

DUE: Before class please email me a brief description (200-500 words) of the individual you are going to write about for the final project and explain how you learned about this person.

### **Part II: Biographical writing: "Great men," great women, and other methods.**

February 27

Reading:

1. William Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, selections TBA. (I will provide these)
2. Alan Galloway, *Walter Raleigh: Architect of Empire*, 2019. If you are doing a précis this week, please do it on the Galloway book.

March 5:

Reading: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*, 1995.

March 12: No class – enjoy spring break!

March 19:

Reading: Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits*, 2006.

DUE: Before class please email me the citations for at least one primary source and one secondary source that you will use to write about your individual for the final project. Explain why these sources are important for your study and how you will use them.

March 26:

Reading: Jill Lepore, *Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin*, 2014.

### **Part III: Contextualizing Lives**

April 2:

Reading: Camila Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico*, 2006.

April 9: No class; I will be out of town.

Reading: Please browse the “Enslaved Children of George Mason” website at <https://ecgm.omeka.net/> and watch a related video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4emJTL-e8k>

April 16:

James Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*, 2011.

DUE: Before class please email me the citations for at least two primary sources and three secondary sources (different from those you sent me on 2/20) that you will use to write about your individual for the final project. Please explain why these sources are important for your study and how you will use them.

### **Part IV: Writing about individuals in groups**

April 23 Luis R. Corteguera, *Death by Effigy: A Case from the Mexican Inquisition*, 2014.

April 30 Jane Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, 2011.

### **PRÉCIS/SUMMARY INSTRUCTIONS:**

You will write three précis/summaries of the weekly readings over the course of the semester. You may choose when to hand them in, but obviously doing at least one early in the semester is good because you will have time to get my comments and apply them to the later summaries. The précis should be 500-800 words each and they should answer the following questions: Who is the author of the text? When was the text written? How was the text written (i.e. what sources did the author use and what methods did the author use to extract meaning from these sources)? Why was it written – what did the author hope to reveal or prove? Why is this text significant? What is good about this text? What could be improved about this text? These précis should be written out in paragraph form – don't send in a list. Please email them to me at [jbristol@gmu.edu](mailto:jbristol@gmu.edu) by 10 am Thursday morning the week that we are doing the reading so that I have a chance to look at them before we discuss the reading in class.

### **FINAL ASSIGNMENT:**

Write an 8,000-10,000 word introduction to a book that you imagine writing about a particular individual in history. The introduction should include a brief biography of the individual, a discussion of why the individual is historically important (is this person representative of something? Exceptional? Ordinary? Famous? Unknown? Is this person significant in a different way? These are all issues we will discuss in class), a discussion of at least three primary sources and at least eight secondary sources you would use to write about this person, and a discussion of the methodology you would use to interrogate your sources. The final project is due May 11 by 9 am. Please email it to me at [jbristol@gmu.edu](mailto:jbristol@gmu.edu).

The entire project, including the small assignments along the way (noted below and on the syllabus), is worth 40% of the final grade. If you don't hand in one of the smaller assignments you will lose points from the final grade.

#### Related due dates (also noted in syllabus):

*February 20, before class:* Please email me a brief description (200-500 words) of the individual you are going to write about and how you learned about this person.

*March 19, before class:* Please email me the citations for at least one primary source and one secondary source that you will use to write about your individual and explain why these sources are important for your study and how you will use them.

*April 16, before class:* Please email me one the citations for at least two primary sources and three secondary sources (different from those you sent me on 2/20) that you will use to write about your individual and explain why these sources are important for your study and how you will use them.

*May 11, 9 am.* Please email me the final project.